



Kalamazoo Wraps News

IMPROVING LIVES THROUGH COLLABORATION

August/September 2007

Recently, Alex Unwin, the Kalamazoo Wraps Youth Coordinator, met with Justin Hartness, a Calling All Youth (CAY) member, and discussed what's important to him, his many talents, and community involvement.

A.U. How long have you been involved in CAY?

J.H. Since it first started almost a year ago.

A.U. What made you want to become involved?

J.H. I wanted to get my views and opinions out there and make a difference.

A.U. How would you describe the mission and purpose of CAY?

J.H. Youth trying to make a difference in our community for youth with severe emotional disturbances (SED) and their families and reducing the stigma surrounding it.

A.U. What keeps you motivated to stay so involved in improving the system of care?

J.H. To know that I'm really making a difference in a lot of people's lives.

A.U. Who else would benefit from participating?

J.H. Anyone in a family dealing with SED.

A.U. How old are most of the youth involved?

J.H. Around 18-20 years old, but with a few younger youth. We're hoping to change that, though. I am 15 years old.

A.U. You recently attended a very large national conference in Atlanta. What was the purpose of having youth attend the conference?

J.H. Basically so we could see how youth across the country are doing things in their communities, share ideas, and bring those ideas back to use in our own.

A.U. Did other youth attend?

J.H. Yes, there was a big group of youth that came from every state.

A.U. What was the conference like?

J.H. A variety of workshops that you scheduled your days around. The workshops gave you ideas of how to build your own youth groups and gain awareness about what other groups have done.

A.U. What did you learn?

J.H. I learned that there's more places out there trying to do the same thing and that gave me more motivation to keep doing it.

A.U. Were there special activities for youth?

J.H. Yes, we had a talent show and went to the Georgia Aquarium.

A.U. The rap you performed for the talent show in Atlanta was awesome. How long have you been rapping?

J.H. Since I was 12 or 13 my friends and I would have mini rap battles, but I've been singing all my life.

A.U. What do you like about performing?

J.H. It helps me be free and get rid of all the stress and stuff stored up in my mind.

A.U. What do you personally hope to achieve through your involvement in CAY?

J.H. I just hope I can make a difference in the lives of children in the future.

A.U. Well, I am glad you are a part of CAY. Do you have any advice for youth who read this article and feel like their opinions aren't making a difference?

J.H. Get out there and do something about it! Get involved in a local youth organization.

For more information about Calling All Youth, please contact Jacalyn Paulding at 269-343-5896.